

We Claim

1. A dried, ready-to-eat cereal product comprising a gelatinized starch matrix which includes a coating or filling containing a probiotic micro-organism.
2. A cereal product according to claim 1 in which the gelatinized matrix is an extrusion cooked starch source.
3. A cereal product according to claim 1 in which the coating or filling comprises a carrier substrate which contains the probiotic micro-organism.
4. A cereal product according to claim 3 in which the carrier substrate is a fat, a protein digest, milk solids, a sugar or a particulate flavoring agent.
5. A cereal product according to claim 1 further comprising a lipid layer on the gelatinized starch matrix, the lipid layer causing a particulate carrier substrate, which contains the probiotic micro-organism, to adhere to the gelatinized starch matrix.
6. A cereal product according to claim 1 in which the probiotic micro-organism is selected from *Bacillus coagulans*, *Bacillus licheniformis*, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Bifidobacterium animalis/longum*, *L. johnsonii* La1, *Pediococcus acidilactici*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, and *Enterococcus faecium* SF68.
7. A cereal product according to claim 1 further containing a source of soluble fiber.
8. A cereal product according to claim 1 in the form of a breakfast cereal, an infant cereal, or a convenience food.
9. A cereal product according to claim 2 in which the gelatinized starch matrix is in flaked or expanded form.
10. A cereal product according to claim 1 in the form of a pet food.

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41. A dried, ready-to-eat pet food in the form of kibbles, each kibble comprising:
a gelatinized starch matrix which includes a protein source,
a coating or a filling containing a probiotic micro-organism.
- 5 B 8 pet food 11
12. A cereal product according to claim 11 in which the coating or filling comprises a carrier substrate which contains the probiotic micro-organism.
- B 9 pet food 12
13. A cereal product according to claim 12 in which the carrier substrate is a fat, or a protein digest, or a mixture thereof.
- 10 B 10 pet food 11
14. A cereal product according to claim 11 in which the probiotic micro-organism is selected from *Bacillus coagulans*, *Bacillus licheniformis*, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Bifidobacterium* sp., *Pediococcus acidilactici*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, and *Enterococcus faecium* SF68.
- 15 B 11 pet food 11
15. A cereal product according to claim 11 further containing a source of soluble fiber.
- 20 12
16. A dried, ready-to-eat pet food in the form of coated kibbles, each kibble comprising:
a gelatinized starch matrix which includes a protein source,
a coating of a carrier substrate which contains a probiotic micro-organism;
the carrier substance being a fat, or a protein digest, or a mixture thereof.
- 25 B 13 pet food 16
17. A cereal product according to claim 16 in which the probiotic micro-organism is selected from *Bacillus coagulans*, *Bacillus licheniformis*, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Bifidobacterium* sp., *Pediococcus acidilactici*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, and *Enterococcus faecium* SF68.
- 30 B 14 pet food 16
18. A cereal product according to claim 16 further containing a source of soluble fiber.
- 35 15
19. A process of preparing a dried, ready-to-eat pet food, the process comprising cooking a starch source and a protein source to form a gelatinized starch matrix containing protein; forming the gelatinized matrix into kibbles;

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drying the kibbles; and coating the kibbles with a coating which contains probiotic micro-organisms.

- 5 ¹⁶20. A process according to claim ¹⁵19 in which the starch source and protein source are extrusion cooked; extruded through an orifice; and then cut into kibbles.

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